

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LAGOS 10482 131108Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 10482

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, UR, SO, ET, NI
SUBJECT: DRAWING AFRICAN ATTENTION TO SOVIET ACTIVITY IN THE HORN

REF: (A) STATE 214253, (B) 76 LAGOS 162, (C) LAGOS 10247,
(D) LAGOS 10229, (ALL NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT NAY POINTED EFFORT TO
STIMULATE NIGERIAN EXPRESSION OF CONCERN OVER SOVIET
ACTIVITY IN HORN WOULD LIKELY BE INEFFECTIVE, AND
POSSIBLY EVEN COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THAT
AMBASSADOR DASUM COULD POINT OUT TO GARBA IN LOW KEY THE
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN USG AND SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA,
THUS POSSIBLY INDUCING SOME NIGERIAN ACTION ALONG DESIRED
LINES. END SUMMARY.

2. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT IS ACUTELY
SENSITIVE ABOUT ANY USG STATEMENT OR ACTION WHICH IT SEES
AS ATTEMPT TO INTERPRET POLITICAL EVENTS IN AFRICA FOR IT.
WE RECALL THE VITRIOLIC NIGERIAN REACTION (REF B) TO
PRESIDENT FORD'S LETTER TO AFRICAN HEADS OF STATE CONCERN-
ING SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN ANGOLA. AT THAT TIME, THE FMG
DESCIRBED U.S. STATEMENT AS "OVERBEARING", "PATRONIZING"
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LAGOS 10482 131108Z

AND A "FATUOUS ATTEMPT TO INSULT THE INTELLIGENCE OF
AFRICAN NATIONS AND SCORN THE DIGNITY OF THE BLACK MAN."
IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT WE CONSIDER TO BE A NORMAL STATEMENT
OF USG VIEWS, NIGERIAN MAY TESTILY INTERPRET AS A LECTURE.

3. WHILE THE PRESENT CONTEXT OF US/NIGERIAN BILATERAL
RELATIONS IS CONSIDERABLY BETTER, WE DOUBT THAT THE

NIGERIANS WOULD BE WILLING TO MAKE ANY STATEMENT ON SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN THE HORN WHICH ARE BASICALLY CONGRUENT WITH OURS. WE ASSUME NIGERIANS WILL ACT ON THOSE VIEWS AS THEY CONSIDER APPROPRIATE, JUST AS MEA COMMISSIONER GARBA, WITHOUT PROMPTING, RECENTLY EXPRESSED CONCERN TO CUBAN FONMIN ABOUT CONTINUING CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA (REFTEL D). WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT SUCH NIGERIAN ACTION WOULD HAVE BEEN LESS LIKELY IF USG HAD SUGGESTED BEFOREHAND TO NIGERIANS DESIRABILITY OF SUCH A MOVE. CONSIDERING THE LIKELIHOOD OF DIVIDED COUNSEL ON THE SUBJECT WITHIN THE FMG, U.S. PRESSURE FOR SOME OVERT STATEMENT ON THE HORN BY FMG MIGHT WEAKEN THE HAND OF THOSE WHO MIGHT FAVOR SUCH A STATEMENT BUT WOULD NOT LIKE TO APPEAR AS SEEKING TO DO US A FAVOR.

4. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE FOLLOWING APPROACH OFFERS SOME SLIGHT CHANCE OF SUCCESS. UPON HIS RETURN TO POST, AMBASSADOR EASUM IN A NORMAL TOUR D'HORIZON WITH GARBA (WHO IS NOT EXPECTED BACK UNTIL END THIS WEEK) COULD TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK SOMEWHAT ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES:

--WE NOTE WITH SATISFACTION THE RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY OBASANJO AT LIBREVILLE AND ELSEWHERE TO THE EFFECT THAT NIGERIA IS DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT CONFLICTS AMONG OAU MEMBERS AND VIEWS SUCH CONFLICTS AS A TRAGIC WASTE OF RESOURCES.
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 LAGOS 10482 131108Z

-- ALTHOUGH THE USG HAD EARLIER EXPRESSED A WILLINGNESS IN PRINCIPLE TO PROVIDE DEFENSIVE ARMS TO SOMALIA, WE HAVE MORE RECENTLY STATED PUBLICLY IN WASHINGTON THAT WE HAVE DECIDED NOT TO DO SO FOR THE TIME BEING IN VIEW OF THE FIGHTING IN THE OGADEN. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE FMG WILL WELCOME OUR PRESENT POLICY.

--WE NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS UNFORTUNATELY SUPPLYING A FULL RANGE OF WEAPONS TO ETHIOPIA, WHILE CONTINUING TO PROVIDE WEAPONS TO SOMALIA. THIS IS BEING DONE BOTH DIRECTLY AND THROUGH OTHER GOVERNMENTS, BUT AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS HAVE NOT YET TAKEN THE SOVIETS PUBLICLY TO TASK FOR THIS.

5. GARBA'S ATTENTION WOULD THUS BE FOCUSED ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOVIET AND USG PERFORMANCE IN THE HORN. HOWEVER, HE WOULD BE LEFT TO DRAW HIS OWN CONCLUSIONS AND TO TAKE WHATEVER ACTION HE MIGHT FEEL WOULD BE APPROPRIATE.

6. WE DOUBT THAT A MORE DIRECT APPROACH TO GARBA BY A WESTERN OR THIRD WORLD AMBASSADOR WOULD PROVIDE THE DESIRED RESULTS.

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